

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 180810Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7868
INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC HONOLULU
COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 7276

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, JA
SUBJECT: UPPER HOUSE ELECTION -- IF LDP LOSES ITS MAJORITY

SUMMARY: TALK OF LDP LOSS OF MAJORITY IN FORTHCOMING
UPPER HOUSE ELECTION HAS INCREASED SPECULATION HERE--
MOSTLY BY SOME OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN--ABOUT NECESSITY
OF FORMING SOME KIND OF COALITION IN POST-ELECTION
PERIOD. WE BELIEVE IT IS TOO EARLY TO COUNT LDP OUT,
AND THAT FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, ELECTION WILL NOT
RESULT IN FORMATION OF COALITION GOVERNMENT. LDP COULD
WELL WIND UP WITHOUT MAJORITY IN UPPER HOUSE, HOWEVER,
WHICH WOULD REQUIRE IT TO OBTAIN SUPPORT FROM MODERATE
OPPOSITION ON A RECURRING BASIS IN ORDER TO GET LEGISLATION
PASSED. MOST OBSERVERS VIEW SITUATION WITH GOOD DEAL
OF EQUANIMITY AND CONSERVATIVE POLITICIANS ARE RELATIVELY
CONFIDENT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO OBTAIN NECESSARY SUPPORT.
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UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, NO ONE IS PREDICTING
DRAMATIC CHANGES IN JAPANESE FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC POLICY
OR IN ITS RELATIONS WITH US, BUT IMPORTANCE OF CENTRIST
PARTIES WILL INCREASE SUBSTANTIALLY, DEMANDING NEW
APPROACHES IN OUR DEALINGS WITH THEM. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH NO ONE CAN BE SURE, A NUMBER OF USUALLY

RELIABLE OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT LDP WILL LOSE ITS PRESENT ONE-SEAT UPPER HOUSE MAJORITY IN JULY ELECTION. WHILE SUCH A RESULT WOULD NOT TOPPLE CABINET--NON-CONFIDENCE MOTIONS CAN ONLY BE BROUGHT IN LOWER HOUSE WHERE LDP HAS FOUR-SEAT MAJORITY--IT COULD HAVE FAR-REACHING EFFECT ON LDP ABILITY TO MANAGE DIET PROCEEDINGS AND TO PASS IMPORTANT LEGISLATION. IT COULD ALSO, OF COURSE, MARKEDLY AFFECT INTER-PARTY RELATIONS. THERE IS, THEREFORE, GOOD DEAL OF SPECULATION, STIMULATED BY MEDIA, AS TO HOW POLITICAL SYSTEM WILL COPE WITH SITUATION IN WHICH LDP MAY NO LONGER CONTROL MAJORITY IN UPPER HOUSE WITH MANY OBSERVERS PREDICTING YET ANOTHER "NEW ERA" IN JAPANESE POLITICS, STILL DOMINATED BY CONSERVATIVES, BUT WITH CENTRIST PARTIES HOLDING "SWING VOTE" AND OCCUPYING NEW POSITION OF INFLUENCE.

2. THERE ARE AT THIS POINT TOO MANY IMPONDERABLES TO PREDICT ELECTION OUTCOME, WHICH WILL TURN ON A VERY FEW KEY CONTESTS. LDP COULD WELL HOLD ITS OWN, IN WHICH CASE PROBLEMS OF PRESENT NEAR BALANCE IN UPPER HOUSE WOULD PERSIST. THERE IS DEGREE OF UNCERTAINTY, HOWEVER, THAT WARRANTS FURTHER EXAMINATION AND FOLLOWING IS AN ATTEMPT, BASED ON TALKS WITH BOTH LDP AND OPPOSITION POLITICIANS AND POLITICAL OBSERVERS, TO SUGGEST BROAD COURSES EVENTS MIGHT TAKE IF LDP WERE TO LOSE ITS UPPER HOUSE MAJORITY.

A. FIRST, AND MOST WIDELY EXPECTED COURSE, ASSUMES THAT LDP WILL LOSE A FEW--SAY THREE
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OR FOUR--UPPER HOUSE SEATS. SUCH A RESULT WOULD AROUSE CONSIDERABLE INTRA-PARTY CRITICISM OF FUKUDA/OHIRA LEADERSHIP, BUT NEITHER COULD BE FORCED TO RESIGN AND FUKUDA-LED GOVERNMENT WOULD MOST PROBABLY REMAIN IN POWER. NO OBJECTIVE OBSERVER SUGGESTS THAT OPPOSITION PARTIES COULD SUMMON SUFFICIENT UNITY TO SUPPLANT LDP AS DOMINANT UPPER HOUSE FORCE. STATEMENTS BY JSP AND CGP LEADERS IN PAST WEEK INDICATE THEY ARE AS FAR APART ON COMPOSITION OF "POST-LDP" GOVERNMENT AS IN PAST, AND NLC HAS FLATLY REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN OPPOSITION-LED COALITION.

LDP WOULD NO LONGER ENJOY MAJORITY, HOWEVER, AND IT WOULD BECOME IMPERATIVE FOR PARTY TO OBTAIN PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION FROM OPPOSITION PARTY(IES) FOR PASSAGE OF GOVERNMENT BILLS THROUGH UPPER HOUSE, WHICH CONSTITUTIONALLY MUST PASS BY SIMPLE MAJORITY ALL LEGISLATION EXCEPT BUDGETS AND TREATIES. AT PRESENT, MOST LOGICAL PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATION ARE CENTRIST DSP, NLC AND CGP, ALL OF WHICH SHARE GOOD DEAL OF COMMON GROUND WITH RULING CONSERVATIVES. MOST STABLE FORM OF COOPERATION WOULD BE

THROUGH CONCLUSION OF EXPLICIT AGREEMENTS FOR LEGISLATIVE COOPERATION. SUCH AGREEMENTS ARE NOT LOOKED ON WITH FAVOR, HOWEVER, BY EITHER LDP OR CENTRIST PARTIES AS THEY WOULD TEND TO RESTRICT FURTHER FREEDOM OF ACTION OF LDP LEADERSHIP, IDENTIFY CENTRIST PARTIES TOO CLOSELY WITH CONSERVATIVES, THUS BLURRING THEIR INDEPENDENT IMAGES, AND MEET WITH CONSIDERABLE RANK-AND-FILE RESISTANCE ON BOTH SIDES. MORE LIKELY DEVELOPMENT, AND ONE GENERALLY EXPECTED BY CONSERVATIVE POLITICIANS, IS THAT LDP WILL BE ABLE TO OBTAIN TACIT, AD HOC SUPPORT ON SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE ITEMS FROM ONE OR MORE OF THREE CENTRIST PARTIES ON CASE-BY-CASE BASIS. THIS WOULD CONSIDERABLY ENHANCE INFLUENCE OF CENTRISTS AND THEIR LEVERAGE ON POLICY FORMULATION, PERHAPS EVEN LEADING TO ROLE IN DRAFTING LEGISLATION. CONCEIVABLY, CENTRISTS COULD EVEN PARTICIPATE IN FUTURE GOVERNMENT BUDGET DRAFTING. (TO SOME EXTENT WE HAVE ALREADY WITNESSED THIS MODUS OPERANDI IN CONFIDENTIAL

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LOWER HOUSE, E.G., REVISION OF THIS YEAR'S BUDGET
TOKYO 3411--AND REDRAFTING OF OKINAWA LAND LAW--
TOKYO 6902.)

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

B. SECOND GENERALLY SUGGESTED SCENARIO ASSUMES LDP LOSSES WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY LARGER, LEADING TO IMMEDIATE DEMAND FOR REPLACEMENT OF FUKUDA/OHIRA LEADERSHIP AND, CONCEIVABLY, A SPLIT IN LDP. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, FUKUDA/OHIRA ALLIANCE COULD POSSIBLY COME UNGLUED AND FORMER PRIMIN MIKI, STILL SMARTING FROM HIS LONG PREMEDITATED OUSTER LAST DECEMBER, MIGHT BE ENCOURAGED TO RENEW HIS THREAT TO LEAVE PARTY. IF MIKI WERE TO LEAVE AND EVEN A FEW OTHERS JOINED HIM, LDP COULD BECOME MINORITY PARTY IN LOWER HOUSE AS WELL. FUKUDA COULD BE FACED WITH PROSPECT OF SUCCESSFUL NON-CONFIDENCE MOTION AND DECIDE HE HAD NO RECOURSE BUT TO CALL LOWER HOUSE ELECTION WITHIN YEAR, DESPITE PRESUMABLY DIM LDP PROSPECTS. AT PRESENT, HOWEVER, MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE MIKI WOULD NOT LEAVE LDP. HE WOULD BE UNLIKELY, THEY ARGUE, TO ATTRACT SUFFICIENT NUMBERS TO BE ABLE TO FORM CENTRIST REPLACEMENT FOR FUKUDA AND MIGHT BE BETTER OFF REMAINING IN PARTY TO

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BARGAIN FOR FUTURE CABINET AND PARTY POSTS. EVEN IN WORST CASE, OBSERVERS BELIEVE ODDS WOULD FAVOR FUKUDA REMAINING IN OFFICE FOR SIMPLE REASON THAT THERE IS NO OTHER BROADLY ACCEPTABLE LDP LEADER.

3. EITHER ELECTION RESULT WOULD, HOWEVER, CONSIDERABLY WEAKEN FUKUDA. ALTHOUGH NO LDP RIVALS COULD UNSEAT HIM, THEY WOULD BE ABLE FURTHER TO RESTRICT HIS OPTIONS IN CHOOSING PARTY EXECUTIVES AND CABINET OFFICERS. DIET MANAGEMENT WOULD BECOME FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE IMPERATIVES OF SECURING CENTRIST COOPERATION IN CONSTRUCTING A NEW UPPER HOUSE MAJORITY.

4. DESPITE UNCERTAINTIES SUGGESTED ABOVE, FUTURE IS VIEWED HERE WITH GOOD DEAL OF EQUANIMITY BY POLITICIANS ACROSS SPECTRUM. OPPOSITION PARTIES REMAIN DEEPLY DIVIDED ON FUNDAMENTAL POLICY QUESTIONS AND, DESPITE NEW POSSIBILITIES, LIKELIHOOD OF EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION PARTY UPPER HOUSE CONTROL IS NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY. FURTHERMORE, AS LONG AS CONSERVATIVES CONTINUE TO HOLD MAJORITY IN LOWER HOUSE, OPPOSITION PARTY CABINET REMAINS AT BEST ONLY FUTURE THEORETICAL POSSIBILITY. THUS, WHILE THERE IS LITTLE IF ANY EVIDENCE THAT POLITICIANS ARE PLANNING SERIOUSLY FOR FUTURE, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENCE AMONG CONSERVATIVE POLITICIANS, MEDIA OBSERVERS AND BUREAUCRATS THAT FUTURE WILL EVOLVE WITHOUT MAJOR WRENCHING OF SYSTEM AND WITH FUNDAMENTAL CONTINUITY IN JAPAN'S FOREIGN AND

DOMESTIC POLICIES INTACT. SOME LDP POLITICIANS HAVE TOLD US THEY ALREADY HAVE EFFECTIVE LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH CENTRIST PARTIES. THEY ARE, FOR EXAMPLE, RELATIVELY CONFIDENT THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO WORK WITH CENTRISTS, PARTICULARLY DSP, IN DIET AND SOME EVEN BELIEVE THAT "NEW ERA" WILL, BY PUTTING GREATER RESPONSIBILITY ON OPPOSITION, RESULT IN MORE EXPEDITIOUS, LESS CONTENTIOUS DIET DEBATE AND ACTION. MANY BUREAUCRATS SHARE THIS FEELING. COMPROMISE PASSAGE OF JFY-77 BUDGET MAY ALREADY

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HAVE SET MEANINGFUL PRECEDENT. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, CONTINUING DECLINE IN LDP FORTUNES MAY BE FORCING OPPOSITION TO TAKE MORE RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS TO PROJECT IMAGE AS RESPONSIBLE ALTERNATIVE. FACT THAT JAPAN FACING INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES MAY FACILITATE PROCESS.

5. IN OUR VIEW, EVOLVING SITUATION DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN POLITICAL BREAKDOWN OR RADICAL POLICY CHANGE. RISE OF NLC INDICATES CONTINUED VOTER PREFERENCE FOR CONSERVATIVE POLITICS. GROWING APPARENT ISOLATION OF IDEOLOGICALLY ORIENTED JSP AND JCP ON LEFT AND DEVELOPMENT OF MORE BROADLY BASED MODERATE-CONSERVATIVE CONSENSUS COULD RESULT IN FEWER DIET BREAKDOWNS AND BROADER POLICY AGREEMENT THAN EXISTED WHEN LDP MAJORITIES WERE UNASSAILABLE. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF CHANGING DYNAMICS WITHIN MODERATE-CONSERVATIVES, IT COULD LEAD TO MORE FREQUENT CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND, IF LDP DECLINE CONTINUES, TO NECESSITY OF COALITION CABINETS AND ATTENDANT PROBLEMS. BUT THIS IS ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT AN IMMEDIATE POSSIBILITY.

6. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD REPEATEDLY THAT US INTERESTS WILL NOT BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY DEVELOPMENTS NOW UNDERWAY. ALL THREE CENTRIST PARTIES ARE FIRMLY COMMITTED TO MAINTENANCE OF CLOSE TIES WITH US. DSP AND NLC EXPLICITLY SUPPORT CONTINUATION OF US-JAPAN SECURITY SYSTEM, AND, WHILE OFFICIAL CGP POLICY CALLS FOR NEGOTIATED TERMINATION OF MST, PARTY LEADERS HAVE ASSURED US THEY ARE IN NO HURRY, AND THIS SHOULD BE READ AS "NO CHANGE." MOREOVER, ALL PARTIES ARE KEENLY AWARE OF JAPAN'S DEPENDENCE ON US, NOT ONLY FOR MILITARY SECURITY, BUT FOR ECONOMIC WELL-BEING. THERE IS GROWING CONSENSUS IN OTHER AREAS AS WELL. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE IS NO MARKED DISAGREEMENT WITH PRESENT GOJ POLICY TOWARD PRC, USSR OR SEA. OF PENDING FOREIGN POLICY CONCERNS, ONLY KOREAN PENINSULA STIRS DEEP AND SHARPLY DIFFERING EMOTIONS.

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THUS, DOMESTIC DIFFERENCES ARE LIKELY TO PROVIDE MOST CONTENTIOUS ISSUES, FOR HERE OPPOSITION PARTIES DIFFER MARKEDLY WITH CONSERVATIVES ON PRIORITIES.

7. IF IMPORTANCE OF CENTRISTS CONTINUES TO INCREASE, AS WE BELIEVE IT WILL, THOSE PARTIES WILL MERIT ADDITIONAL US ATTENTION TO REFLECT EMERGING REALITY. WE SHOULD CONTINUE, AS IN PAST, TO MAINTAIN CLOSEST TIES WITH LDP AND OTHER CONSERVATIVES WHILE SUSTAINING OUR CONTACTS WITH JSP AND LABOR MOVEMENT. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, WE SHOULD SEEK TO INCREASE CONTACT WITH CENTRISTS, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN US POLICY TO INSURE OUR VIEWS ARE IN MIND AS THEY DEVELOP AD HOC RESPONSES TO ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO US.
SHOESMITH

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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